



1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut

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*PRESERVING, CONSERVING AND GROWING SMART*

## Testimony to the Commerce Committee

February 26, 2009

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, and members of Commerce Committee, for the record, my name is Heidi Green. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am the President of 1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut, a statewide smart growth education and advocacy organization. Our mission is to promote and shape growth throughout Connecticut's cities and downtowns, ensuring a prosperous economy, healthy natural environment, and distinctive, integrated and walkable communities. 1000 FRIENDS advocates for smart growth policies that afford incentives to invest in brownfield redevelopment, green buildings, transit-oriented development, and provide affordable housing options. In addition, it was my pleasure to serve as one of three co-chairs of the Economic Development Subgroup of the Smart Growth Working Group.

Achieving smart, sustainable and viable growth in Connecticut requires significant policy changes at the state, regional and local levels to: 1) reduce the state's reliance on the regressive property tax; 2) increase regional cooperation for economic development and land use; 3) modernize the state's zoning codes; 4) encourage long-term investments that will engender benefits to Connecticut's cities and metropolitan regions: investment in transit, transit oriented development, brownfield remediation and reuse, affordable housing and preservation of lands and water resources, critical wildlife habitats and prime soils that sustain our agricultural economy.

1000 FRIENDS of Connecticut supports bills **969 An Act Concerning Brownfields Funding**, **6097 An Act Concerning Brownfields Development Projects**, and **6504 An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee**.

We believe that an even distribution of funds obtained from the Land Protection, Affordable Housing and Preservation account are essential for encouraging smart growth in Connecticut, as they fund and sustain brownfield development projects, the agricultural sector, environmental and historic preservation initiatives. These are responsible and forward-thinking investments, beneficial to all of our communities and citizens.

Found in **Bill No. 6097**, we support increasing the flexibility to remediate and adapt older industrial properties in flood plains. The process spelled out for exemption is iterative and citizen- and developer-friendly. We suggest that

*commercial* as well as residential redevelopment should be above the five hundred year flood mark with parking and entryways, etc. on the lower levels. As many industrial sites are located within the flood plain, we believe this will encourage redevelopment while protecting citizens and properties downstream. The liability relief section is reasonable and represents a good compromise between developers' needs for certainty and citizens' right to due process.

We support creating a nonlapsing fund for smart growth purposes as seen in Bill 969. We also support business tax credits to clean up brownfields. Strong incentives to renew and redevelop property will afford more vibrant landscapes, help control substance-contaminated sites and stabilize municipalities' tax bases and neighborhood property values.

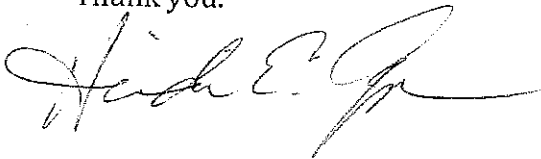
As stated in **Bill No. 6504**, 1000 FRIENDS supports bonds to be directed toward funding for investment gaps in historic preservation, brownfields development, small farm preservation and other multi-purpose projects. Pursuant to smart growth principles, funding for these projects helps address and meet community needs, allows for healthier redevelopment and offers job opportunities that sustain the economy.

Lastly, we support the establishment of the process for applicants to request a preapplication review of proposed economic development projects, which comports with smart growth criteria, standards and timelines. We believe giving investment priority to projects that meet smart growth principles, will help us weed out unsustainable development we can't afford and create new, healthy and aesthetically pleasing projects. A preapplication review process will allow for greater certainty and more complete and timely filings and findings.

Redeveloping brownfields and investing strategically to support smart growth principles is key to our efforts to move forward an ambitious vision to transform Connecticut's cities and downtowns. Connecticut's advancement of sustainable communities should not be delayed, especially in the context of the national recession. It creates jobs now and a more competitive state in the future.

I encourage your support for **Proposed Bills 969, 6097, and 6504**.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heidi E. G.", with a stylized flourish at the end.